
Dr. BUTLER's
S E R M O N
T O T H E

SONS OF CLERGY-MEN,

In St. PAUL's Cathedral,

November 30. 1704.



Dr. BOTTLE

R. M.

TO THE

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A
S E R M O N

Preach'd at the

Anniversary Meeting

O F T H E

Sons of Clergymen,

I N T H E

Cathedral Church of St. PAUL,

On Thursday, Nov. 30. 1704.

By LILLY BUTLER, D. D. Minister of
St. Mary Aldermanbury.



L O N D O N :

Printed for Wabazon Aylmer at the Three Pigeons
in Cornhill, against the Royal-Exchange. MDCCIV.



T O

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STEWARDS of the late FEAST

OF THE

Sons of the Clergy.

Gentlemen,

T HIS Sermon, which
was lately Preached, and
is now Printed at Your Request,
I thought it became me to Pre-

A 3

sent

The Epistle Dedicatory.

*sent thus particularly to You,
who so readily undertook the
Care and Management of Our
Last Anniversary Meeting:
It is a Plain Discourse, but I
hope, in some measure, pro-
per for the Occasion. I am
sensible it comes abroad with
Great Disadvantage, after so
many Excellent Sermons on the
same Subject: However, it will
be some Satisfaction to me,
that I have attempted to pro-
mote so Necessary and Princi-
pal a Part of True Religion:
But much more if it shall
please*

The Epistle Dedicatory.

*please God to give any Success to these my Endeavours;
Which is heartily Pray'd for,
by,*

GENTLEMEN,

Your Affectionate

Friend and Servant.

Lilly Butler.

The Epistle Dedicatory

Please God to give me grace
to keep my heart
which is hereby presented

GENEVA

Your Affectionate

Friend and Servant

John Calvin

J A M E S I. 27.

Pure Religion and undefiled before God and the Father, is this, To visit the Fatherless and Widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the World.

AMongst the Jewish Converts, to whom this Epistle was written, there were some impure and uncharitable Men, who valued themselves as more Religious than others, upon the account of some higher Speculations, and a more excellent Faith, which they pretended to. St. James therefore particularly endeavours to rectify the Mistakes, and to take down the Presumption of these Men, by shewing, the insufficiency of any sort of Knowledge or Faith which is not fruitful in Good Works, and the *vanity* of any thing called *Religion*, which is not accompany'd with Purity and Charity, that whatever may make Men *seem to be religious* to themselves, or to other men, *this is pure Religion, and undefiled before God and the Father, to visit the Fatherless and Widows in their Affliction, and to keep themselves unspotted from the World.*

The Words of the *Text*, placed in the most natural Order, make this Proposition.

To visit the Fatherless and Widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the World, is pure and undefiled Religion before God and the Father. This is the pure and holy Religion which God our Father requires of us: Those he esteems as the true Worshippers of him, who in these things serve him: These are necessary and principal parts of true Christianity, and the most manifest Testimonies of Sincere Piety and Devotion, of a due Acknowledgment of the Divine Perfections, as they are revealed to us in the Gospel, and a becoming Regard to God.

I shall confine my Discourse to the first of these Parts or Testimonies of True Religion, as most proper for our present Consideration, which is express'd in these Words, *To visit the Fatherless and Widows in their Affliction.* And that I may make my Discourse as seasonable as I can,

- I. I shall explain the Duty of *visiting the Fatherless and Widows in their Affliction.*
- II. I shall shew, That this is a necessary and principal Part, and a signal Testimony of True Religion.
- III. I shall shew, That it is especially so, *To visit the Fatherless Children and Widows of God's Ministers--- in their Affliction.*
- IV. I shall shew what special Obligations we are under, who are Members of this Body, to the Exercise of Charity in general, and of this sort in particular.

I. I shall shew what is meant by *visiting the Fatherless and Widows in their Affliction.*

For the better understanding of that Duty which is thus express'd, let us consider,

First;

To the Sons of the Clergy.

3

First, The Objects of our Charity. And

Secondly, The Charitable Act we are to exercise towards them.

First, The Objects of our Charity; *the Fatherless and Widows in their Affliction*; in any want or distress, wherein they need, and are capable of our assistance. St. James did not design to exclude any other afflicted Objects from a share in our Charity, but only to recommend *the Fatherless and Widows* to our more particular regard; they have commonly the greatest need of help, and are most destitute and comfortless *in their Affliction*; they are deprived of those Relations who were most concerned, obliged and inclined to defend and provide for them; and consequently they are most exposed to wrong and oppression: Wherefore Job joins these two together, *The Fatherless, and him that hath none to help him*, Job 29. 12. And the Church, Lam. 5. 3. sets forth the greatness of her distress in this manner; *We are Orphans and Fatherless, our Mothers are as Widows. The Fatherless and Widows in their affliction*, though they are not the only Objects of our Compassion, yet they are generally such as deserve our first regard, when we are disposed to exercise our Charity.

Secondly, Let us consider the Charitable Act we are to exercise towards them who are in want or distress, especially *the Fatherless and Widows in their affliction*, which is called in the Text, *Visiting*. To *Visit* doth often signify, in Holy Scripture, to shew Mercy, to give such good things as are wanting, and to remove Evils suffered: Thus God is said to have *visited Sarah*, when he caused

her to conceive and bear Abraham a Son, Gen. 21. 1, 2. *I will visit you, saith the Lord to his People, and perform my good word towards you, in causing you to return to this place, Jer. 29. 10. The Lord their God shall visit them, and turn away their Captivity. Zeph. 2. 7.* And the great Mercy of God to his People, in sending his only begotten Son into the World, to redeem them from Sin, and Death, and Hell, and to make them happy, is thus exprest. *Luke 1. 68. Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for he hath visited and redeemed his people.* And in like manner, by *visiting* in the *Text* we are to understand performing Acts of Love, Mercy and Charity to those who are *in affliction*: So we find it interpreted by our Blessed Saviour, *Matth. 25. Not visiting those who were sick and in Prison, v. 43.* is exprest, *v. 44. by not ministering* unto them, not relieving them according to their distress. This then is the duty of the *Text*, to be kind and charitable to all who are in distress, especially *the Fatherless and Widows in their affliction*, to do them all the good offices their necessities require, the most fervent Love will prompt us to, and we are able to perform. I proceed now,

Secondly, to shew, that this is a necessary and principal Part, and a special Testimony of True Religion, that if we would have the Reputation, the Comfort and Reward of Religious Men, of Sincere and Good Christians, we must *visit the Fatherless and Widows in their affliction*, and as we have ability and opportunity, exercise all the Acts of the most fervent Love and Charity to one another.

This will appear if we consider these following things.

I. Mer-

To the Sons of the Clergy.

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I. Mercy and Charity are most necessary Fruits of that Knowledge of God which the *Gospel* instructs us in, and cannot be separated from a due regard to God, as he is there discovered to us. The great thing the *Gospel* acquaints us with, is, how *God loved the World*; what wonderful Compassion, and Mercy, and Bounty he hath shewed to his poor distressed Creatures, how graciously he hath *visited and redeemed his People*, what inestimable *Treasures* he hath *reserved for us*, and what rich supplies of Grace he bestows, for the healing, comforting and saving weak and wretched Sinners. He that knows and believes all these things, as the *Gospel* represents them to us, must have the most large and lively apprehensions of the Love and Goodness of God: And surely we cannot but have an high esteem for those Virtues, which the God we adore and worship is so much concerned to be known by, and hath given us so great, and glorious, and beneficial an Example of; we cannot but aspire to an imitation of that which we believe to be the most illustrious Excellence of the most Absolute and Sovereign Good. For if we truly love ourselves, we cannot but desire to be as perfect and as happy as we can be; and we know there can be no greater Perfection and Happiness than to be like God, especially in Goodness and Mercy, the Exercise whereof is set forth in *Holy Scripture*, as the Supreme Glory and Delight of the Divine Nature. St. *John* therefore makes loving one another the great Evidence, and the inseparable Effect of the true Knowledge of God; *Every one that loveth, knoweth God; he that loveth not, knoweth not God, for God is love*, 1 John 4. 7, 8. How absurd then is it for uncharitable and unmerciful Men, to assume the

the Character of Religious Men, when they do not truly know the Nature and Perfections of God? when they so manifestly *deny him in their works*, to be that infinitely good and benevolent Being he more especially desires we should believe and acknowledge him to be? In short, if we know that *God is Love*, we cannot but know that Love is our Duty, and Interest, and Glory, and Happiness, and therefore cannot be satisfied with our selves, if we don't find, that in some good measure we *love one another as God hath loved us*.

2. Mercy and Charity conform us, above any thing, to the example of our Lord and Master *Christ Jesus, the Author of our Faith*, and the Pattern of True Religion, who came down from Heaven, and dwelt amongst us, to give us an Example in his own Life, how we are to honour God, and *glorify our Father who is in Heaven*: Exercises of Mercy and Charity were the constant Employment of his whole Life, he went about doing good both to the Souls and Bodies of Men, instructing the Ignorant, and reducing those who were gone astray; healing the Sick, strengthening the Weak, feeding the Hungry, and shewing seasonable and proper Acts of Mercy to those who were in affliction: He made himself poor, that we might be made rich, and at length gave himself for us, that we might not perish, but have Everlasting Life: And all this he did on purpose that he might leave us an example that we should follow his steps, and love one another as he hath loved us. Can there then be a greater contradiction than an unmerciful uncharitable Christian, a Religious Man, who is a stranger to the practice of those things which were the continual Exercise, and the most conspicuous Virtues of the Author and great Exemplar of True Religion?

Religion? Can any man pretend to know what will most please and honour God better than he who came from him, and is One with him? And can we suppose that he would employ the most of his Time and Zeal in any thing else, to whom it was as his *Meat and Drink*, yea more dear than his Life, *to do the Will*, and to advance the *Glory of him who sent him*? What then can be a more necessary and signal part and evidence of True Religion, than shewing mercy, and doing good, after the Example of our most charitable and beneficent Lord, who thus *glorify'd* his Father upon Earth, and therefore is now *glorify'd* in Heaven with the glory he had with him from the beginning?

3. Mercy and Charity are those Duties which the Gospel, the Rule of our Religion, doth in a most earnest and especial manner require and press the performance of. *The end of the Commandment*, saith St. Paul, is *Charity*, 1 Tim. i. 5. This is the chief Design and Aim of the Christian Doctrine. This is the *Royal Law*, the Sovereign Duty of Christianity; *Now abideth Faith, Hope and Charity*, these three, but the greatest of these is *Charity*, 1 Cor. 13. 13. *Above all things have fervent Charity among your selves*, 1 Pet. 4. 8. *Give, and it shall be given to you: The merciful shall obtain mercy*, saith our Blessed Saviour: But he shall have judgment without mercy, that hath shewed no mercy, saith St. James. *To do good, and to communicate forget not*, saith the Apostle to the Hebrews, for with such Sacrifices God is well pleased, Heb. 13. 16. And St. Paul layeth it as a particular Injunction upon Timothy, *To charge them who are rich in this world, that they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate, that they may lay* Luke 3. 8. Matt. 5. 7. James 2. 13. 1 Tim 6. 17, 18, 19.

lay hold on Eternal Life. Can any thing then be more inconsistent with the Character of a Christian, than in these things not to obey the Gospel? Can we pretend to have any Reverence for God, any Regard for his Authority, any due Esteem of his Wisdom and Goodness, any thing worthy to be called *Religion*, if we are destitute of those Virtues, and unfruitful in those Good Works, which are so strictly enjoined, so highly commended, so frequently inculcated, so greatly encouraged, so vehemently urged, and so particularly insisted on by him?

4. Other Exercises of *Religion* can be of no value in the sight of God, where this Duty of Charity is neglected. It is rather Impudence than Worship, for a man to beg Relief of God, who is himself importuned in vain by the Necessities and Afflictions of his Brother, who will not part with any thing for God's sake, who will not hearken to the most earnest Importunity of the God he addresseth to. What an Affront must it be to God, to pretend to join in Prayers to him, for *those who are in trouble, need, sickness, or any other adversity*, if he hath put it in our own power to relieve them, and we will not? What do all our Verbal Thanksgivings signify, if we refuse to *do* any thing for him, for those poor Members of *Christ*, whom he hath appointed to receive our Alms for him? having told us, that what we give to them, he takes as an expression of kindness and thankfulness to himself. What mockery is it to *come and sit before God as his People*, and to *hear his Word*, if *Covetousness* hath so possessed our *Hearts*, that we have no regard to the most plain and express Commands of it? How little will our Lord esteem our Solemn Commemorations of his Sufferings in the Holy *Sacrament*, if we can

can see him want, and suffer in his Members, and shew no pity, or give no relief? The vanity and inefficacy of all such Religious Exercises, without Charity, is most frequently asserted in Holy Scripture: *Whoso stoppeth his ears at the cry of the poor, he also shall cry himself, but shall not be heard, Prov. 21. 13.* To what purpose are the multitude of your Sacrifices to me, saith the Lord? Who hath required this at your hands, to tread my Courts? But then he adds, *Relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the Widow.* Come now and let us reason together, saith the Lord: Then they might hope that God would have a gracious respect to them and their Sacrifices, that they would no longer be *Vain Oblations*, or an *Abomination* to him as they were before. *Is not this the Fast that I have chosen, saith God, to undo the heavy burthens, to let the Oppressed go free, to deal thy Bread to the Hungry, when thou seest the Naked, that thou cover him: Then shalt thou call, and the Lord shall answer, Isa. 58. 6, 7, 9.* By all which it appears, that Charity is a most necessary and principal part of *Religion*, without which no other Acts of Divine Worship can be pleasing and acceptable unto God.

5. The great Ends of *Religion*, the Glory of God, the Good of his People here, and the disposing us for Heaven hereafter, are most highly promoted by Charity, and therefore it must be a principal part of it.

(1.) Hereby God is greatly glorify'd. Charity is in it self a manifest honouring of God, one of the most certain and signal Expressions of a due acknowledgment of his Divine Glory and Perfections: It is a greater Testimony of our Esteem and Value for him,

to be Followers and Imitators of him, than the highest Strains of Praise our Words can reach to. To part with that which the World counts most precious, for his sake, is an Expression of Love and Gratitude, which carries the Brightest Marks of Sincerity upon it. We honour God as the Proprietor and Owner of all things, when we shew our selves ready to dispose of our Wealth according to his Order and Directions. We declare our Trust and Confidence in his Power, and Providence, and Promises, when we part with that we have present possession of, in hopes of a future and unseen Reward. We declare him to be most worthy *to be feared, and had in reverence*, when we submit to his Injunctions, though in appearance to our loss, when we chuse rather to lessen our Estates, than to provoke his Displeasure: And therefore these two things are fitly joined together, *Fearing God, and hating Covetousness.*

Exod. 18.
21.

The Exercise of Charity will also engage both our selves and others to glorify God, by other Duties of Religion and Worship: How readily shall we rely on the Mercy and Goodness of God, when we feel in our selves how kind and helpful Love and Charity make one Man to another? when we find that we, as *evil* as we are, are so forward to give and do good to them who ask of us, with what Faith and Confidence shall we petition our *Good* Father who is in Heaven? How heartily will those we relieve in their Great Necessities, offer up their Prayers to God for their Benefactors, and give Thanks to him for those Seasonable Supplies he gives them by their Hands? How effectually will they be moved, when they not only see, but taste the Fruits of the Charitable Man's *Good Works*, that *to glorify our Father which*

is *n* Heaven? St. Paul tells the *Corinthians*, That their Charity to their Christian Brethren did cause *abundant Thanksgivings unto God*, that *by the Experiment of this Ministration, they glorified God for their professed Subjection unto the Gospel of Christ, and for their Liberal Distribution unto them*, and were excited to Prayer for them, 2 Cor. 9. 12, 13, 14.

(2.) Another great End of True Religion, is the Present Happiness of those to whom it is revealed: Moses tells the People of *Israel*, That God gave them the *Com-* Deut. 10.
mandments he delivered to them *for their good*, to make 13.
them a Happy People. And what Duty of Religion, what Command of God, doth tend more to the Common Good, than this of Charity? What a Happy People must that be, where *no man minded his own things only*, where every one did partake of the others most hearty Good Wishes and Prayers, and they were constantly employ'd in all Good and Charitable Offices to one another? How near would this Love and Charity bring us to the Happy State of the Church above? How principal a part then of Religion must that be, which doth in so eminent a manner promote the End of Religion, as to the Church in this World, the Present Good and Happy Estate of it?

(3.) Another End of Religion is, to dispose and qualify us for the Happiness of Heaven, to *make us meet to be partakers of the Inheritance of the Saints*. And certainly nothing can be more necessary or available to this End, than Mercy and Charity. The *Father of Mercies* cannot be a Proper Enjoyment for an Unmerciful Soul: Neither can the Uncharitable be fit to be received into the nearest Union and Fellowship with God, who is Love. *Charity never faileth*, that accompanies us into the other
C 2 World,

World, and will help to constitute the Happiness of it. Some Exercises of it will indeed cease, because there will be no Necessitous or Afflicted Persons in Heaven, but that Principle of Love and Charity which engaged us in these Exercises here, will *never fail*: Our Happiness will chiefly consist in the Love of God, and one another. What then can be more necessary and effectual, to the qualifying us for the Happiness of Love hereafter, than the hearty Exercise of it here?

Thus much then may suffice to shew, what a Just Character St. James gives us of Charity, in the *Text*, when he calls it *Pure and Undeiled Religion before God and the Father*; a most necessary Duty, a principal Part, and a conspicuous Testimony of Sincere and Acceptable Religion in the sight of God, whose Name, and Nature, and Perfection is Love. What Profession soever we make, what Form of Godliness soever we put on, how constant and regular soever we are in all other Acts of Devotion and Worship, we can have no right to the Title or Reward of Pious and Religious Men, if we can see our Brother have need, and shut up our Bowels of Compassion from him; if, having Ability and Opportunity, we refuse to minister to the Necessities of our Brethren, especially the *Fatherless and Widows in their Affliction*, whose Case is commonly most worthy of a Compassionate Regard.

I proceed now

III. To shew, that it is a singular Testimony of True Religion, and what it obligeth all sorts of Men to; To take particular care of the *Fatherless Children and Widows of God's Ministers in their Affliction*, and

to have a more especial Regard to them in the Exercise of their Charity.

This will appear, if we consider these following Things.

First, They are the Children and *Widows* of those who were most nearly related unto God, and therefore our Charity to them doth more immediately express our Affection and Reverence for God himself. *As we have opportunity*, we are to *do good to all men*, but more *especially* to our Christian Brethren, because they are the *Household of God*. But God's Ministers are yet more peculiarly appropriated, and more nearly related to him; they are the Principal *Officers*, the *Stewards* of his Family, by whom he delivers his Commands, and receives their Common Addresses: They, in a manner, represent him, and are devoted to those Exercises, wherein he is most concerned and most earnestly employ'd himself, for they are *Labourers together with God*: What kind Offices therefore are done for them and theirs, we may reasonably conclude, God will in a more especial manner take as done to himself, and be highly pleased with us, when we cannot bear to see them *forsaken*, (who are so nearly allied to him, and so highly dignified by him) *or their Seed begging their Bread*. To shew Kindness to a *Prophet*, in the Name of a *Prophet*, upon the account of his Relation to God, hath therefore the promise of a more Eminent Reward: And we give rather better Evidence of the Sincerity of our Regard to God, and the Relation his Ministers bear to him, when we chuse their *Widows* and Orphans for the Objects of our Charity, than if we had done the same things for themselves whilst they

they were living. *They* might many ways have been serviceable to our Interest, which *these* cannot be: *Their* Countenance, Advice, or Assistance might be thought worthy to be acknowledged or purchased by some Tokens of our Good Will; but in relieving their Children and *Widows in Affliction*, we manifestly give for God's sake, from such a hearty Respect to the Character of his Ministers, as survives their Persons, and *hoping for nothing again*. This kind of Charity then may more especially deserve to be called Religious.

Secondly, By applying our Charity, in a more especial manner, to the Relief of *the Fatherless Children and Widows* of God's Ministers *in their Affliction*, we shew our Value for *Religion*, for those Holy Offices they assist us in, for those Spiritual Good Things which by their Ministry are convey'd to us; that we think it highly reasonable that they, who *labour in the Word and Doctrine*, and *watch for the Souls* of Men, should be remembered by us with the greatest Honour, and the most lasting Affection; which we cannot give a more certain Testimony of, than a Compassionate Regard for the Indigent and Distressed Families they leave behind them: It is such a Proper Expression of our Gratitude, so apparently suggested to us by the Obligation laid upon us, to relieve the Temporal Wants of the Children of that Order of Men, by whom ours are admitted into the Church of God, nourished with *the Sincere Milk of his Word*, directed and assisted in obtaining the Favour of God, and the Salvation of their Souls, as none can be backward to who know how to *compare Temporal Things with Spiritual*. If we have any True *Religion*, we shall have much the greatest value for Spiritual Good Things, and then we cannot but

but *highly esteem them in love for their Works sake*, who constantly employ their Endeavours to enrich both us and ours with them. And will not such great and hearty Affection for them effectually dispose us to a Charitable Concern for their *Widows and Children in Affliction*, and have some Conformity to the Love of God, who shews Kindness to the *House and Posterity*, yea, to the *Childrens Children* of those, who are the Objects of it?

Thirdly, If this kind of Charity should prevail and increase, it would mightily conduce to the greater Success of the Labours of God's Ministers, in advancing True Piety and *Religion* amongst those who are committed to their Care. For whatever tends to give them more Life and Courage in the discharge of the several Duties of their Office, to abate their Worldly Cares and Fears, to give them more Leisure for, and less Distraction in their Meditations and Study, must conduce to this End: And I doubt not but that the Prospect of a Kind and Charitable Respect to their Families, which too many of them know they must leave in a very Low and Distress'd Condition, would most effectually serve to these Purposes. This would, in a great measure, ease their Minds of some of their most Afflicting, Dejecting, and Distracting Thoughts, which, through the Constant Presence of such Tenderly Beloved Objects, would be otherwise continually pressing into them; and enable them to manage the Affairs of God and Religion, and the Souls of Men, with greater Intention and Alacrity, and consequently with greater Success.

Fourthly,

Fourthly, Our Charity will probably do the most good, when it is employ'd for the Support and Maintenance of such Objects. The Children of God's Ministers, we may reasonably expect, will be so formed to Religion and Virtue, by the Pious Example, and Early Instruction of their Parents, and the more Constant Attendance upon the Offices of the Church they have obliged them to, that what we bestow upon them will be like *Seed sown on good ground*, bringing forth the greatest Plenty of Good Fruit, to our own Satisfaction, to their Benefit, and to the Publick Good: Such Education, as they generally have, may not always prevail against the Temptations of the *Corrupt and Naughty World* they are sent into, but it is the best Armour they can have against them: And what Spiteful Observations soever the Enemies of our Religion and the Ministers of it, may pretend to make to the contrary, are sufficiently confuted by these our Annual Meetings and Processions: There may be seen Persons of the Highest Dignities in Church and State, of Chief Command in our Fleets, and Authority in the City, of Plentiful Fortunes, and great Interest in their Country; which cannot, in many Instances, be owing to their Patrimonial Advantages, or to any thing else but that Industry, Honesty and Virtue, they were so excellently instructed, and so carefully *trained up in*, and the Blessing of God upon them.

Fifthly, All sorts of Men are obliged to a more Particular Regard to the Poor *Widows* and Orphans of the Ministers of God, because these his Ministers are Great and Common Benefactors, constantly employ'd in promoting

moting the General Good of all : What can be more for the Publick Good, than the Common Practice of all those Virtues our Religion teacheth and obligeth to? Such *Righteousness* would indeed *exalt a Nation*, increase the Strength and Reputation of it ; banish all those Vices, which are destructive of Peace and Unity, which draw Men into Factions and Parties, and make their Publick Employments only Opportunities of serving their Private Interests: Such *Righteousness* would put us under the Particular Care of the Divine Providence, secure the Aids of Almighty Power, and bring down all the Choicest Blessings of Heaven upon Church and State, upon us and our Posterity. Now the Ministers of *Christ* are *Preachers* of this *Righteousness* ; it is the Proper Business of their Office, to instruct Men in it, and to persuade them to it by all the Mighty Arguments of the *Gospel*: For this they study, and labour, and spend themselves : And though the Success doth not always answer the Zeal of their Endeavours, yet to these is certainly owing, that Vice is not yet more daring and presumptuous, that *Iniquity* hath not yet *been our Ruin*, and that we have so many *Righteous Men* amongst us, for whose sake we have been all so wonderfully preserved and prospered. And can any Objects so well deserve a General and Publick Charity, as the Distressed Families of those Persons, who so effectually promote the General and Publick Good, who serve their Country to as Good Purpose as any others can, but under the greatest Necessity of leaving nothing but Poverty to their Mourning Relations?

Sixthly, The Poor *Widows* and Children of God's Ministers deserve a Particular Regard, when Men are disposed to exercise their Charity, because Poverty and Want are commonly more grievous to these than to most others who labour under it, and they are least capable of helping themselves. The Dignity of the Office of a Clergyman, Custom, and the Expectations of the People, make it but too necessary for him to live as much above Contempt as he well can, and not to put his Wife and Children to those Mean and Servile Labours, whereby others are capable of supporting themselves: And therefore when they come to fall into the Deepest Poverty, and all that Contempt which usually attends it, and are so very incapable of subsisting themselves, how extremely deplorable must their Condition be? And certainly the greater the Affliction is, and the less Power the Afflicted have to relieve themselves, the more Particular Care ought to be had for their Support and Succour.

If now we lay all these Things together, and seriously reflect upon them, surely we cannot but conclude, that all Men, who have a Due Regard to God and Religion; who propose to themselves the doing the most Good, and relieving the most Deserving and Pitiful Objects, in the Exercise of their Charity, will prefer the Poor *Widows* and Children of God's Ministers, to, at least, many others *in their Affliction*.

I pro-

I proceed now,

IV. To shew, what Particular Obligations we are under, who are Members of this Body, to the Exercise of Charity in general, and of this sort in particular.

First, We are particularly obliged to this by our Honourable Birth. I call it Honourable, not upon the Account of that *Honour* which comes from *Men*, but that which is far more worthy to be mentioned, at least from hence, *Honour which comes from God*, which our Fathers derived from the Great King of all the World, whose Principal Agents and Ministers they were, in carrying on the Great Affairs of his Heavenly Kingdom: And ought not the Consideration of their Near Alliance to God, and the Noble Offices they served him in, to elevate our Minds above the Vulgar Level, and to inspire us with an Ambition of excelling in those Virtues of Goodness, and Mercy, and Bounty, which are of greatest Reputation in the Court of Heaven, and the Supreme Glory of it's Great King? There is nothing can be said of *Him* more Honourable than this, That *he is Good, and doth Good*. It is the Glory of the Blessed *Angels* who are about his Throne, that they are his *Ministring Spirits* for the good of his Church. And this was the Honour of our Fathers, who were a sort of *Angels* upon Earth, that they were employed by him to do the Greatest Good to Men.

A S E R M O N Preach'd

What then can be more becoming of us, or more necessary to maintain the Honour we derive from them, than a Shining Generosity and Beneficence, a Ready and Chearful Embracing all Opportunities of doing Good, especially to those who are of the same Rank and Quality with our selves, honourably descended as we are, but unhappily fallen into Poverty and Affliction.

Secondly, The Sons of the Clergy are particularly obliged, according to their Ability, to *do Good*, and to *Communicate*, and so to *honour God with their Substance*, because they are many of them, at least, brought up, and disposed into those Employments and Callings, which have made them capable of doing this, by those Revenues which were more peculiarly God's, which were solemnly devoted to him and his Service, by the Piety and Charity of our Ancestors. The Example of that Charity, by which they themselves have been subsisted and educated, and which laid the Foundation of that Wealth, which, by the Blessing of God, they have raised upon it, doth especially require their Imitation. *Those Good Works*, which they have not only *seen*, but felt, and reaped the Benefit of, more strongly oblige them, in the like manner, to *glorify their Father which is in Heaven*. And is it not most highly fit and reasonable, that by their Charitable Distributions they should return something to God, out of the Improvement they have made of that, which was most

most properly his own *Portion* and *Inheritance*.

Thirdly, The Sons of the Clergy are particularly obliged to the Exercise of Charity, for the Honour of their Parents, and of that *Religion* they were Ministers of, and for their own Reputation. Shewing Mercy, and doing Good, are such Amiable and Venerable Things, that the World cannot but highly esteem that *Religion* which is effectually productive of them; and the Pious and Prudent Care of those Parents, whose Children they see abound more than others in such Excellent Fruits thereof. But if these are *rich in this World*, and poor in *Good Works*, niggardly and covetous, Men will certainly impute their being so, either to the Weakness of Religion, or the Neglect of their Parents, in not duly instructing them in it; or to a more Inexcusable and Shameful Violation of the Obligations of it, than others, who are as sordid as themselves, can be charged with. They cannot have a great value for *Religion*, and the Ministers of it, without aggravating to the utmost degree of Guilt, such Notorious and Scandalous Contradiction, in the Sons of the Clergy, to the Genius, and Precepts, and Designs of Christianity.

Fourthly, As we have greater Obligations to Charity in general, so also to this in particular, of *visiting the Fatherless Children and Widows* of God's Ministers in their *Affliction*; because we are incorporated for this very purpose, that we might more effectually exercise and promote this kind of Charity.

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Charity. The Powers we have were granted to us, upon a Presumption that we would make this our Particular Care, and we are hereby constituted the Guardians and Overseers of this sort of Poor; and upon these Days we make a Publick Profession of our accepting this Trust: So that not only Charity, but Honesty and Faithfulness to our more Express and Particular Engagements, oblige us, if we are able, to be willing to communicate for their Support and Relief. And blessed be God, that there are so many Members of this Body, who so heartily and generously promote the Ends of our Incorporation: May their Numbers still increase, and the Blessings of God be multiplied upon them, and upon all those who lend a Helping Hand in carrying on so good a Work, where there is so much need of Assistance, and wherein the Honour of God, the Interest of Religion, and the General Benefit both of Church and State are so highly concern'd. We may hope in time to be eased of some part of our Charge, by the late Munificent Grant of our most Gracious Sovereign, for whom we ought heartily to pray, That God would *remember Her for this, for the Good Deeds She hath done for the House of Her God, and for the Offices thereof.* But at present there are, and yet will be, so very many *Widows* and Children of the *Clergy*, in the most Desolate and Necessitous Condition, that our utmost Zeal in procuring, and Liberality in contributing to their Relief, will be necessary to preserve them from the lowest degree of Contempt and Poverty. Let us then *abound more and more* in these most Excellent Fruits and Instances

ces of *Pure and Undeiled Religion*, before God and the Father. to the Glory of our Good God and our most Holy Religion, and to the Increase of our own Reward, in that Day when God will render to every Man, not only according to the Quality of what he hath done, but also to them who have done well, Glory and Honour, according to the Number and Measure of their Good Works. For they that have sown plentifully, shall reap plentifully; and to them, who have abounded in the Work of the Lord, an Entrance will be administred abundantly, into the Everlasting Kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

F I N I S.

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